

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 PRS-01 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05
CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EPG-02 DODE-00 EB-07
FPC-01 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06 OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04
TRSE-00 ACDA-07 /116 W
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R 021647Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3481
INFO ALL OECD CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN

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USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ENRG FR
SUBJECT: NATURAL GAS DISCOVERY IN FRENCH PYRENEES

1. FRENCH NEWS REPORTS ARE CARRYING STORY OF MAY 26
DISCOVERY OF DEPOSIT OF DOMESTIC NATURAL GAS "WHICH
MIGHT BE AS LARGE AS LACQ". FIND WAS IN COMMUNE OF
CLARENS ON LANNEMESAN PLATEAU IN HAUTES-PYRENEES.
STRIKE WAS REPORTED BY ELF/AQUITAINE TO HAVE BEEN MADE
IN ROCK FORMATION AT DEPTH OF 6150 METERS AND TO BE
PRODUCING 10 METER FLAME AS WELL-HEAD. WORK AT SITE
BEGAN LAST FALL, AND THIS APPARENT INITIAL SUCCESS
FOLLOWS FIVE YEARS OF UNPRODUCTIVE EXPLORATION DRILLING
IN AREA--SOMETIMES TO DEPTHS OF 7200 METERS.

2. WHILE NO REALISTIC COMMENT ON IMPORTANCE OF
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LANNEMEZAN FIND CAN BE MADE AT THIS EARLY DATE, VERY
FACT THAT ELF MENTIONS POSSIBILITY OF ITS BEING IN SAME
LEAGUE WITH LACQ US ENCOURAGING NEWS. LONG
FRANCE'S PRINCIPAL DOMESTIC NATURAL GAS SOURCE, LACQ
PRODUCTION HAS NOW PEAKED AT SOME 7 MILLION TONS OF OIL
EQUIVALENT (MTOE) PER YEAR, AND IT IS EXPECTED TO BE IN
ABSOLUTE DECLINE BY 1982 OR BEFORE. REVISED SEVENTH

ECONOMIC PLAN MAKES BASIC ASSUMPTION THAT OIL IMPORT SAVINGS ARE TO BE COVERED BY INCREASED UTILIZATION OF NUCLEAR AND GAS POWER--NOT BY COAL. THE 17 MTOE CONTRIBUTION WHICH NATURAL GAS MADE TO COUNTRY'S OVER-ALL 1976 ENERGY REQUIREMENT (10 PERCENT OF TOTAL) IS PROGRAMMED TO GROW TO 37 MTOE (16 PERCENT OF TOTAL) BY 1985, AND IT HAS BEEN PRESUMED THAT INCREASED IMPORTS FROM ALGERIA, NORTH SEA, USSR, AND NETHERLANDS WOULD HAVE TO TAKE UP SLACK. NOW, HOWEVER, CONFIRMATION OF IMPORTANCE OF LAST THURSDAY'S LANNEMEZAN FIND WILL BE EAGERLY AWAITED BY ECONOMIC PLANNERS HERE, WHO WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO REVISE DOWNWARD THEIR ESTIMATES OF GAS AND LNG IMPORTS FRANCE WILL NEED DURING UPCOMING CRITICAL PERIOD OF TRANSITION AWAY FROM PRESENT OVER-RELIANCE (65 PERCENT OF TOTAL ENERGY NEED) ON PETROLEUM.
GAMMON

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